

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

WHITE HOUSE -

S E C R E T STATE 221161

NODIS

FOR AMBASSADOR, WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MARR, US, EG, IT

SUBJECT: MIG MAINTENANCE

REF: ROME 14935

1. PARA 4 OF REFTTEL, WHICH WE ARE REPEATING TO YOU, REFERS
TO SEPTEMBER 11 ARTICLE IN LONDON SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, TEXT
OF WHICH FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT: SOVIET BUILT FIGHTERS OF THE EGYPTIAN AIR
FORCE ARE TO BE KEPT FLYING BY BRITISH COMPANIES. A
MULTI-MILLION POUND DEAL HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR BRITISH
AEROSPACE AND ROLLS ROYCE TO OVERHAUL AND REFURBISH MIG-21

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PLANES, WHICH FORM THE BACKBONE OF EGYPT'S AIR DEFENSES.
AFTER ITS BREACH WITH MOSCOW, EGYPT HAS BEEN LARGELY
CUT OFF FROM SPARES AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AND IT HAS
FACED A CRITICAL RUNDOWN OF ITS SQUADRON. THE TWO BRITISH
FIRMS WILL BASE TEAMS IN EGYPT TO OVERHAUL THE PLANES AND
POWER PLANTS AND REPLACEMENT COMPONENTS WILL BE MADE IN
FACTORIES IN THIS COUNTRY. ALREADY ROLLS ROYCE ENGINEERS

HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE OVERHAUL OF SEVERAL TUMANSKY SOVIET ENGINES FOR THE MIG-21'S.

TRANSPORT PLANES: APART FROM THE MIG PLANE AGREEMENT, BRITISH COMPANIES ARE AT AN ADVANCED STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR OTHER MILITARY CONTRACTS WITH EGYPT WHICH COULD ULTIMATELY BE WORTH SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS. THESE INVOLVE THE WESTLAND LINKS HELICOPTER AND ITS ROLLS ROYCE GROUND EFFECT ENGINE AND THE BACK SWING FIRE ANTI-TANK MISSILE. ALL THREE PRODUCTS ARE SCHEDULED FOR LICENSED PRODUCTION USING FINANCING FROM SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. THE EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE IS ALSO EXPECTED TO BUY ABOUT A DOZEN HS-743 TWIN ENGINE TRANSPORT PLANES. BRITISH EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS ARE OFFERING EGYPTIAN PLANE NAVIGATION AND ATTACK SYSTEMS, RADARS, SIMULATORS, TANK FIRE CONTROL SYSTEMS, TANK PARTS AND SHELL FUSES TO UPDATE OR MAINTAIN EXISTING SOVIET EQUIPMENT. ONE LOSS HOWEVER APPEARS TO BE THE CONTRACT FOR NEW TRAINERS WHERE BRITISH AEROSPACE HAD HOPED TO SELL HAWK AIRPLANES. REPORTS FROM FRANCE LAST WEEK SUGGESTED THAT A FRANCO-GERMAN PLANE, THE ALPHA JET, WILL GET THE ORDER FOR 200 MACHINES WHICH INCLUDES MANUFACTURE IN EGYPT. END TEXT.

2. GIVEN POTENTIAL FOR CONFUSION AND FURTHER DELAY WHICH ARTICLE COULD CAUSE, WE NEED QUICK CLARIFICATION OF
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CURRENT STATUS OF UK MAINTENANCE SUPPORT TO EGYPTIAN AIR FORCE WITH EMPHASIS OF COURSE ON MIGS. YOU MIGHT DISCUSS WITH UK DCM MOON AS WELL AS GOE. IN THIS RESPECT, MOON WILL NOTE THAT LEAK IN PRESS WAS DATELINED LONDON REPEAT LONDON. WE WILL IMMEDIATELY REPEAT YOUR REPLY TO ROME.

3. WE ARE INFORMING EMBASSY LO8M ON FYI BASTS AT THTS TIME. WE BELIEVE IT PREFERABLE TO KEEP ACTION IN CAIRO.

4. HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY HAVE BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 15.

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